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DEPARTMENT FOR A A/S CARTER AND AF/SPG, NSC FOR MGA VIN AND
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SUBJECT: MEASURED U.S. RESPONSE WILL TEMPER GOS REACTION TO
ICC, NCP INSIDER TELLS CDA

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1, (C) Comment: The ruling NCP will judge countries and organizations by how they react to ICC's announcement Wednesday, government insider and former Governor of North Darfur Atta Al Mana'an told CDA on March 2. Vowing that the NCP response to the issuance of the arrest warrant will be both "serious and professional," he added that the NCP will not "overreact," and will continue to protect embassies and diplomats. However, he warned that the US could stoke the anger of the Sudanese public by acknowledging support for the ICC's pursuit of Bashir. Following the announcement, the GOS will be "immobilized" by the ICC challenge and both CPA implementation and Darfur will lose some focus but the U.S. and the international community could assist Sudan by not provoking it, in turn preserving the integrity of the CPA and keeping the Doha negotiations on track.

12. (C) Speaking with CDA Fernandez in the Khartoum offices of the Islamic Cooperative Development Bank, Atta al Mana'an thanked the CDA for his "transparent and frank" attitude in discussions with Sudanese officials, but cautioned that the March 4 announcement of the International Criminal Court (ICC) will be "very dangerous" for Sudan. Mana'an is close VP Ali Osman Taha and his point man for Darfur (as opposed to the NCP's chief Darfur negotiator and Taha rival Nafie Ali Nafie). Calling the National Congress Party's (NCP) outlook "very gloomy" at the moment, he said that countries and international organizations will be judged by their words and their actions following the announcement. For that reason, the NCP's actions over the next week will not depend on the announcement itself, but on the international community's reaction to the ICC announcement, with the NCP putting countries into categories to differentiate between those who voice support for the ICC, and those who remain mum on the issue. There will naturally be mass rallies and "popular expressions of anger" over the next week, but Mana'an pledged that they will not overreact. However, if the U.S. says the wrong thing, it will create hatred and anger at a level previously unheard of among people in Sudan. Mana'an sees almost all Sudanese as united with Omar Al-Bashir, calling it "human nature" that they will not follow or support an outside intervention in Sudanese affairs. Additionally, the ICC will immobilize Sudan by sucking away attention from other issues vital to Sudan, including the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and negotiations on Darfur, but if the international community engages constructively with the NCP, the length and extent of the immobilization will be significantly lessened. Mana'an pledged that the Government of Sudan (GOS) does intend to honor its commitment to protect embassies in Khartoum.

13. (C) Regarding last week's violence in the Southern Sudanese city of Malakal, Mana'an said that the Government of

Southern Sudan (GOSS) now has a "big problem" to deal with, as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was at risk but the NCP would do all it could to restore equilibrium to CPA implementation. CDA challenged Manaan on Malakal saying that the USG was concerned about continued NCP subversion of the South and attempts to weaken GOSS President Salva Kiir, "you are playing with fire in the South," he noted and "the USG will blame you if you promote chaos in South Sudan at this sensitive time." Manaan responded that Malakal "was not intentional," except for the actions of one officer who gave pro-Khartoum warlord Gabriel Tang permission to visit the town. He noted that the NCP responded rapidly to defuse the crisis and it actually could have been much worse since there were unconfirmed initial reports of Arab traders being slaughtered by SPLA soldiers. He also noted that the NCP did not manufacture the many existing tribal tensions already present in the South.

14. (C) Manaan was certain that the ICC will distract from progress in Darfur, leading to more violence and disorder in the troubled region. "It is very difficult to communicate with the community there and make improvements on the ground," he said. A regime distracted by this judicial challenge cannot undertake the delicate work of reforging Darfur's social fabric, "in the best scenario, it will take years." "The government must stay intact for any progress to be made in Darfur." He readily admitted that Sudan could have done more earlier to present the international community with a more favorable situation in Darfur noting that he had suggested "swift punishment" for the perpetrators of the August 25, 2008 Kalma IDP Camp massacre in Darfur, "that was an opportunity lost since it was different than past violence

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carried out in the heat of war." Asked by CDA what he thought would occur in Darfur over the next month, Manaan warily prophesied, "No voice can be heard over the voice of the battle."

15. (C) CDA warned Manaan that with falling oil prices, the ICC, and rumblings between the SPLM and the NCP, Sudan now faces a "perfect storm" scenario, but Manaan countered saying, "We are a very traditional society. We are used to living at the edge of disaster." He noted that Sudanese in both North and South are used to privation and despite rising imports Sudan is a country which can feed itself. Speaking as head of one of Sudan's major banks, he said that one of the Sudanese regime's current problems is making sure that it can pay government workers, "if we can take care of that, we can weather the storm." He acknowledged that South Sudan will have a much harder time given its even greater dependence on oil revenues. Manaan added that the regime's crisis management team to overcome the potential financial crisis will meet next week for the first time.

16. (C) Comment: Like most NCP insiders, the seasoned Manaan takes the long view when looking at the current "perfect storm" scenario, as his government has most likely weathered several "perfect storms" before in 19 years of rule, and still emerged battered but undeterred. His revelation that the NCP will judge other countries based on how they react to the ICC announcement shows that the NCP is still eager to make a deal of some sort, as they presume that the regime's expiration date is open to negotiation and not dependent on pronouncements coming from the Hague. While he certainly overestimates the support the NCP and President Bashir has in Sudan, he is accurate in cautioning the international community not to underestimate the regime's staying power, to focus on the key goals of CPA implementation and tangible improvement in Darfur and to temper its reaction to the ICC. Due to the potential for volatility, and the NCP's long history of stoking disorder within Sudan, Post generally concurs with Manaan that a measured U.S. response in the coming days would keep all options open for the future pursuit of US policy objectives in Sudan.

